

**Friendship Heights
Transportation Management District
Advisory Committee
September 13, 2011**

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Voting Members

Joe Dixon	GEICO
William P. Farley (Chair)	Town of Somerset
Tiffany Gee (Vice Chair)	Chevy Chase Land Company
Cobey R. Kuff	Wisconsin Place
Allison Lazare	United Educators Insurance
Campbell Graeb	Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
William Nathan	M&T Bank
Robert Schwarzbart	Friendship Heights Village Council

Non-voting Members

Sandra L. Brecher	MCDOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
Cherian Eapen	M-NCPPC

TMD Staff

Nakengi Byrd	MCDOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
Jim Carlson	MCDOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
Sheila Wilson	MCDOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services

Absent

James Calderwood	Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers
Julie Davis	Somerset House Management Assn.
Kerri Gates	The JBG Companies
Ann F. Lewis	Friendship Heights Village
Capt. Russell Hamill	Montgomery County Police
Kenneth Hartman	B-CC Services Center

Guests

Robert Cope	Brookdale Community
Bob Joiner	The Agenda News
Delegate Ariana Kelly	Maryland House of Delegates
Julian Mansfield	Village of Friendship Heights
Laura Thornton	Chevy Chase Patch

Abbreviations used herein include:

ADA = Americans with Disabilities Act
CAFE = Corporate Average Fuel Economy
HMO = Health Maintenance Organization
PPO = Preferred Provider Organization
SOV = Single Occupant Vehicle
TMP = Traffic Mitigation Report

Items 1, 2 & 3 – Introductions/Minutes Approval/Chair’s Comments: Chair William Farley called the meeting to order and asked members and guests to introduce themselves.

Campbell Graeub asked to add an item of new business to the agenda. **Mr. Farley** said the Committee would take it up at the end of the meeting.

Mr. Farley asked if Committee members had read the June minutes and if there were any changes.

ACTION: **Mr. Farley** asked for a motion to accept the June minutes; a motion was made and seconded. The June minutes were approved.

Mr. Farley welcomed new Committee members: **Campbell Graeub**, Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights; and **James Calderwood**, Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers. [**Mr. Calderwood** was traveling at the time of the meeting].

Mr. Graeub said he is a retired civil engineer and had worked in transportation during his entire career. Most recently he was in public transportation research for the National Academy of Sciences. **Mr. Graeub** said he has spent the last 27 years in public transportation research. He has lived in the Chevy Chase community for 50 years and is a past president of the Brookdale Citizens' Association.

Mr. Farley moved ahead on the agenda to new business while waiting for **Delegate Kelly** to arrive.

Mr. Graeub raised the issue of parking on Friendship Boulevard and Willard Avenue. In the several years since parking has been allowed on Friendship Blvd., with a two hour parking limit from 9 AM to 4 PM, he has noted that there never seem to be any parking tickets issued. On August 31, a brief survey was done of 17 vehicles parked on Friendship near the mid-block crosswalk to Willard Avenue. Eight of the 17 cars that were seen in the morning were still parked in the same spots by 3:30 PM with no tickets. The same check was made on September 16, and about half of the vehicles were still parked in the afternoon. The same issue applies to Willard Avenue: There is a two hour parking limit, but there seems to be no enforcement. These are the only two major streets in Friendship Heights that the County can control. The County can do a better job in these areas with better enforcement or by installing meters.

Coby Kuff added that the mid-block crosswalk on Friendship that connects to Wisconsin Place is also frequently obstructed by vehicles, impeding access to the crosswalk. This is also a problem in the fire lane near the fire hydrant. **Mr. Kuff** said he has directed Wisconsin Place security personnel to call Montgomery County Police whenever a vehicle is illegally parked in the fire lane.

Robert Schwarzbart added that this has been a frequent problem on Friendship Boulevard. Cars would park in a partial 'nose in' position in what were intended to be GEICO future driveway entrances, blocking the sidewalk and forcing pedestrians into the roadway. He added that parking enforcement on Friendship would be relatively easy, since cars are always parking illegally, and the County has previously been apprised of the situation. However, he believes it is a funding issue – there simply aren't enough police to make regular parking patrols in Friendship Heights.

In other new business, **Mr. Schwarzbart** said that he, **Jim Carlson** and Village Manager **Julian Mansfield** recently drove along Willard Avenue to the River Road intersection, and north along River Road, noting the number of street signs that were obscured by vegetation. Many are only partially readable, while some others are nearly completely grown over with tree limbs. One example: On the approach to the River Road intersection from Willard Road, the No Turn On Red sign that faces traffic on Willard Road is half covered by tree limbs. **Mr. Carlson** said he has been in contact with both County engineers (for Willard) and State Highway Administration (SHA) engineers to get the limbs trimmed back on River Road, but neither has yet been done. **Mr. Carlson** said he had also been in contact with Pepco regarding the limbs that are contacting power lines on River Road.

Mr. Farley said the new business would have to be tabled and he greeted new guests:

Laura Thornton – Chevy Chase Patch

Delegate Ariana Kelly – Maryland House of Delegates

Mr. Farley introduced **Delegate Kelly** to the Committee, describing her committee memberships and professional affiliations:

- Member – Maryland House of Delegates since January 12, 2011.
- Member – Health and Government Operations Committee, which includes the Insurance Subcommittee & Minority Health Disparities Subcommittee.
- Member – Bi-County Agency Committee of the Montgomery County Delegation and a member of Women Legislators of Maryland.
- Attended Walter Johnson High School in Bethesda and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- Active in a number of volunteer and civic organizations:
 - *Fort Sumner Citizens Association.*
 - *Woman's Suburban Democratic Club*
 - *Montgomery Women*
 - *Board of Directors, Democratic Women's PAC of Maryland*
 - *National campaign director for MomsRising.org since 2009*
 - *Executive Director, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland, 2005-08.*
 - *Executive Producer, Persephone Productions, "To the Contrary", airing on Public Broadcasting Service, 2004-05 (associate producer, 2002-04).*
 - *National Judicial Education Program Associate*
 - *National Organization for Women Legal Defense and Education Fund*
 - *Volunteer Coordinator, Travelers Aid International, 1999-2000.*
 - *Annual Fund Manager, Girls Inc., 2000-02.*
- Member – Tifereth Israel Congregation.
- Married with two children.

Item 4 – Discussion with Delegate Ariana Kelly: **Ms. Kelly** greeted the Committee. **Ms. Kelly** said she has been involved with public advocacy for all of her career and was very interested in promoting livable, sustainable communities. She has worked with environmental and healthcare organizations, and has a particular interest in the needs of senior citizens.

Ms. Kelly said she shares the Committee's belief that a sound infrastructure, which includes transportation, is critical in promoting a strong social fabric in the community.

Ms. Kelly added that she does not at present serve on any committees that deal directly with transportation, but she works closely with those who do. She recommended that the Committee invite **Delegate Aruna Miller**, who serves on the Ways and Means Committee, and who also has a background in transportation engineering.

Ms. Kelly said one area of interest for her and one which intersects with infrastructure is to ensure that small businesses partners with communities to provide a voice to advocate for a strong infrastructure. Both private residents and the business community have a vested interest in a well functioning transportation infrastructure. **Ms. Kelly** works with **Ms. Miller** on legislation related to these issues.

Ms. Kelly said she is heavily involved in constituent services the year round and is happy to use her new title to get things done. [*Ms. Kelly distributed her business card to Committee members*]

Ms. Kelly also described her work in these other areas:

- Access to health insurance: Currently serving on the Health Insurance Subcommittee and reviewing health insurance in Maryland. She works collaboratively with insurers to ensure constituents get the care they need.
- Advocacy on behalf of the disabled: Advocates in the health system on behalf of developmentally disabled children to make sure they get proper care from insurers.

- Green issues: Working with consumer groups and industry to on ‘green chemistry’ issues, ensuring that chemical products and processes are put into place that reduce or eliminate the use or generation of hazardous substances.

Ms. Kelly took questions from the Committee.

Robert Schwarzbart noted **Ms. Kelly’s** interest in health care, and said there is always an overlap between health issues and transportation. There are three medical buildings in Friendship Heights, two on Wisconsin Avenue and one located on Friendship Boulevard. All of the traffic patterns in Friendship Heights, and especially the traffic on Wisconsin Avenue, has an effect on access to these buildings. Pedestrian crossing times are a particular concern, since many people traveling to the medical centers are infirm or otherwise limited in their mobility. Crossing times along Wisconsin Avenue have been extended, but not really enough to accommodate those with mobility issues. **Ms. Kelly** asked how much time had been added to the crossing time. **Mr. Carlson** said the new state standard for all crosswalks was to assume an average crossing time of 3.5 feet per second; the previous standard had been 4 feet per second. **Ms. Kelly** agreed that the crossing times are especially important for this population. **Mr. Carlson** said the issue with extending the crossing time beyond the current state standard of 3.5 feet per second would create ‘downstream’ traffic issues in DC; the TMD is unique in that there are multi-jurisdictional issues to consider whenever there are traffic signal timing changes.

Mr. Farley said Ride On Route 23 to Sibley Hospital was in danger of being cut during the recent budget shortfall. He added that Friendship Heights has a large ‘aging in place’ community, and the transportation system is one of the reasons for that. He asked if the state had ever considered having budget oversight of critical transit elements such as these, as it does in rural communities, to avoid cuts. **Ms. Kelly** agreed that it sounded like a good idea some sort of check in place to ensure access to health facilities is maintained. She added that her work on the Health and Government Operations Committee includes access to health needs, and possibly through the Health Equity Subcommittee which she serves on. The committee looks at racial, gender and ethnic disparities in the health system, but can include age- and resource-related disparities as well. Public transit is a critical part of access to health care. It may be something that can be added to the existing health disparities plan checklist; including transit on the checklist would make the plan more effective. **Ms. Kelly** said she was writing the idea down and will explore it further.

Campbell Graeb asked about the status of the state’s gas tax. He noted that with an increase in the federal Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards, and conversion to new types of energy sources, there will be an impact the highway system and, indirectly, other funding such as the aging Metro system. What is the state’s long term plan to deal with gas tax funding? **Ms. Kelly** said there will likely be an increase in the tax and an increase in the revenues from the gas tax as a result. While raising any tax is unpopular, transportation funding is “abysmal” currently and will need to be addressed. More than likely, this will come up in January at the next regular session. There was a blue ribbon commission that recommended:

- that money not be taken out of the highway trust fund to balance the budget;
- restoring local highway user revenues to the communities; and
- raising the gasoline tax.

Mr. Schwarzbart asked how much of an increase in the gas tax is expected. **Ms. Kelly** said she has seen a couple of different plans. The “dream plan” would be to have the tax indexed to inflation. She added that **Del. Aruna Miller** is probably the best person to contact for details, since she serves on the Ways and Means Committee. The issue is in flux at the moment and being influenced by a variety of political considerations. The main goal, whatever the ultimate decision turns out to be, is to balance the need for new revenue with understanding the impact that a higher tax can have on a struggling economy. **Mr. Schwarzbart** said he didn’t object to the tax, but that it should actually go toward maintaining the roads. **Ms. Kelly** agreed and added that it is very important that the law be changed to prevent funds from being taken from the highway trust fund.

Mr. Graeb said Maryland is one of the few states that allow the gas tax to be used to fund other modes. He added that it is more accurate to call the tax a “user fee.” We should get away from calling it a tax.

Mr. Schwarzbart said many essential services, including transportation, are experiencing severe cutbacks due to sensitivity to raising taxes. And, while no one likes paying taxes, the revenue is needed to maintain the basic services of the community. **Ms. Kelly** agreed, and added that she and others in the Montgomery County delegation have to convince the less urbanized areas – the places with wide roads and no real traffic problems – that a certain level of funding is necessary for transportation issues. Transportation is not the same priority in other parts of the state as it is for Montgomery County.

Mr. Farley asked if there is anything the state can do to lessen traffic on Wisconsin Avenue, River Road and other major arteries by encouraging mass transit and other modes. Road congestion continues to be a problem affecting the quality of life of residents. **Ms. Kelly** said **Sen. Brian Frosh**, who is an avid bicyclist, has started working on bringing bike sharing to Bethesda, similar to DC's Capital Bikeshare program. This is at least one thing that can be done to reduce traffic. In terms of encouraging more mass transit, the state is more or less "stuck" at the moment; however, the Purple Line is expected to make a difference and encourage more transit use. **Ms. Brecher** added that the County has been working on bringing bike sharing to the area for quite some time; **Ms. Brecher** attended a meeting with Senator Frosh and the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) just two weeks ago. The County is working closely with MDOT, with the state delegation and with the County's intergovernmental relations staff to bring bike sharing not only to Bethesda, but to Friendship Heights, Silver Spring, the Life Sciences Center in Greater Shady Grove and Rockville. **Ms. Brecher** said that there are issues of safety, especially in the more congested areas and connections to state roads, which need to be addressed; so these issues will be considered carefully in the planning phases.

Ms. Brecher added that she would like to see the state continue to support the Employer Tax Credit, which is one of the key programs used to encourage employers to provide a transit benefit to employees. While it isn't widely used, it remains a valuable tool to use when Commuter Services staff meets with employers. **Ms. Kelly** said she supports the tax credit and will work to keep it available.

Mr. Schwarzbart asked about the state's efforts to make Pepco more reliable. The Friendship Heights area has experienced a number of outages. **Ms. Kelly** said the effort to make Pepco more accountable is ongoing. She added that she has been encouraged by recent communication from her constituents praising Pepco's efforts at improvement.

Cherian Eapen said the state has identified certain Bicycle Pedestrian Priority Areas, a designation applied to more urban, congested areas. White Flint was the first such area to be considered for this label, and the state is currently working through the details as to what it will ultimately entail. Additional areas under consideration are those on or near the Purple Line. Designating areas as priorities for bicycles and pedestrians will aid planners in fitting in the needs of bikers in these areas. Implementing what is needed to fulfill the needs of the priority area tends to be a problem at the state level at times. Getting cars through the area and maintaining a certain vehicle speed seems to be the main focus for state engineers. The state should recognize that urban areas operate differently than other areas in terms of traffic needs, such as bike sharing. **Ms. Kelly** said she would be willing to speak to her colleagues about the priority area designation; she added that she would get more details from **Mr. Eapen** after the meeting.

Mr. Farley thanked **Ms. Kelly** for her time. She distributed her business cards to the Committee and encouraged calls to her office.

Item 5 – Traffic Mitigation Plan (TMP) Annual Reports: Mr. Carlson called the Committee's attention to the summary sheet included in the packet. The following companies submitted annual reports for 2010:

- GEICO
- TCM Media

Mr. Carlson outlined the purpose and elements of the TMPs for **Ms. Kelly** and to familiarize new members. Friendship Heights is one of five transportation management districts in the County, the other four being Bethesda,

North Bethesda, Silver Spring and Greater Shady Grove. The TMDs are more urbanized areas that require more concentrated efforts to reduce traffic. The primary source of most traffic during the morning peak period is from drive alone commuters on their way to work. The County Code requires employers with 25 or more employees to submit a traffic mitigation plan in order to reduce single occupant vehicle (SOV) traffic. **Mr. Carlson** said the TMP does not have objective trip reduction targets, but is a way for Commuter Services to communicate to employees, through their employers, about transportation alternatives – a “foot in the door”.

The TMP has a number of mandatory and voluntary strategies for employers to pursue in promoting non-SOV commuting. The required minimum eight elements are listed below:

1. Designate a contact person to receive and distribute information to employees
2. Post and distribute Information on transit/pooling/other alternatives
3. Facilitate TMD staff presentations to employees and HR/Administrative staff on commute alternatives
4. Promote the Guaranteed Ride Home (free regional program offering emergency rides)
5. Participate in the Annual Commuter Survey
6. Provide Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) information
7. Provide a permanent display area with transit and alternative transportation information
8. Compile information on yearly TMP activities and submit an Annual Report

Mr. Carlson said the TMP is forward looking and asks the employer to commit to certain actions; the Annual Report outlines what specific actions were taken over the past year in fulfillment of the TMP. For example, an employer may report that employees attended a Commuter Information Day event sponsored by Commuter Services; or that the company participated in the Annual Commuter Survey. **Mr. Carlson** said that the TMP and the Annual Reports are now done primarily on line. He added that enforcement of the TMPs, while certainly possible at some point in the future, is not currently being pursued. The emphasis is on working collaboratively with employers and building partnerships.

Mr. Carlson said the Committee’s role is to recommend approval of the TMPs and Annual Reports to the Director of the Montgomery County Department of Transportation. The director formally approves the submission.

Mr. Carlson referred again to the summary sheet in the meeting packet. Both companies – GEICO and TCM Media – fulfilled all mandatory elements of the TMP and also implemented some voluntary measures. He recommended them positively to the Committee.

ACTION: Mr. Schwarzbart moved that the two TMP Annual Reports, for GEICO and TCM Media, be recommended for approval. The motion was seconded. The motion was carried.

Mr. Farley yielded the floor to guest **Robert Cope**. **Mr. Cope** presented ridership statistics for selected Maryland Red Line stations for the month of May. **Mr. Cope** distributed copies to the Committee members. He noted that the peak in ridership for Metro occurred during 2008, the onset of the problems in the financial and housing markets. Other items of note:

- The entry and exit numbers for Friendship Heights, for the morning peak and off-peak period - 3,447 and 2,300 for a total of 5,747 respectively – corresponds very closely to the evening peak and off-peak period numbers exiting the station in the evening.
- Friendship Heights had higher ridership numbers than Bethesda until Bethesda started to accelerate its development.
- Friendship Heights tends to have more residents using the subway in the mornings (the “down” escalator); Bethesda has more people arriving for work (the “up” escalator).
- Bethesda has 400-500 more riders coming in the evening than leaving in the morning due to restaurants and entertainment.

Item 6 – Updates: **Mr. Carlson** called the Committee’s attention to announcements and details in the meeting packet:

- International Car Free Day, Sept. 22
- The Walk & Ride Challenge for Friendship Heights and Silver Spring, Oct. 10-28

Meeting adjourned at 9:55 AM

Next meeting date: November 8, 2011